DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 650 SP 040 495

AUTHOR Chiang, Linda H.

TITLE Building Student Teacher Character: A Profile from Cooperating Teacher Judgments.

PUB DATE 2001-10-00

NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 24-27, 2001).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; *Cooperating Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Public Schools; *Student Characteristics; *Student Teachers

IDENTIFIERS *Character Education

ABSTRACT

This study ascertained public school cooperating teachers' judgments of important student teacher characteristics, noting their suggestions for modifying the curriculum and developing characteristics that student teachers need to teach in public schools. First, a group of 12 cooperating teachers and their student teachers listed important student teacher characteristics. Next, 37 public school teachers from three districts who worked with student teachers ranked the importance of those characteristics. Follow-up interviews were conducted in the next year. Teachers ranked the most important student teacher characteristics as enthusiasm, cooperation, and a positive attitude. They also noted the importance of responsibility, flexibility, organization, preparedness, commitment, vision, total focus, and professional appearance. The most mentioned suggestions regarding student-teacher effectiveness included not having to have another job outside of teaching, the need to accept constructive criticism, the need to be more flexible, and the need to be lifelong learners. Suggestions for curriculum modification included using freshman orientation to raise awareness of character education, adding character education to the student teaching handbook, and making student teachers aware of Character Counts activities and programs. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 461 650

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Linda H. Chiang

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Building Student Teacher Character:

A Profile from Cooperating Teacher Judgments

Mid Western Educational Research Conference

Chicago, IL. 2001

By

Linda H. Chiang, Anderson University

Anderson, IN 46012

SP 040 195

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Building Student Teacher Character:
A Profile from Cooperating Teacher Judgments

Linda H. Chiang, Professor of Education, Anderson University
Anderson, Indiana

Abstract

Building Student Teacher Character:

A Profile from Cooperating Teacher Judgments

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain cooperating teacher judgments of student teacher characteristics. The characteristics were based on INTASC standards and knowledge of the educational model in a school of education in a Midwest university. The second purpose of this study was to modify current curriculum in teacher education programs based on feedback from this study to cultivate character in prospective teachers. Thirty-seven public school cooperating teachers from three school districts participated in this study. These teachers ranked the most important characteristics of student teachers as: enthusiasm, cooperation, and positiveness. The open-ended questions indicated the trait of responsibility, flexibility, commitment, and personal appearance as extremely important. Results from the follow-up interviews and suggestions for curriculum modification were shared.

Building Student Teacher Character:

A Profile from Cooperating Teacher Judgments

Linda H. Chiang, Professor of Education, Anderson University

I. Objectives

Educators are aware of the direct association between the character of individuals and the well being of society (Hunter, 2000). Training prospective teachers to be intellectually smart and morally good have become especially crucial since the late twentieth century. The main purpose of this study was to ascertain public school cooperating teacher judgments of important characteristics of student teachers. The second purpose was to evaluate and modify curriculum based on these teachers' responses, and to develop characteristics that student teachers need to teach in public schools. Third, the collaboration with public schools was to generate energies and communication between public schools and university teacher educators to cultivate effective prospective teachers.

II. Perspectives

According to the American Heritage College Dictionary character, moral, and virtue have been used interchangeably. Aristotle enumerated a list of "intellectual" and "moral" characteristics that can lead to excellence; he also claimed that virtue was a set of unique dispositions, a state of character, a

"knowing how to like and dislike the proper things" that makes a person good and leads ultimately to happiness.

The term "character education" is not new to educational discourse. During the 1970s Kohlberg's theory of moral development and value clarification became popular (Kohlberg, 1975). In the 1980s, as some educators and politicians described their conceptualization of the appropriate direction for values, the term character education resurfaced.

It takes training to cultivate certain characteristics in order for prospective teachers to be competent and effective teachers. Advocators of character education argued that teachers should teach good character traits explicitly rather than leaving such instruction to the "hidden curriculum" (Milson, 2000). However, McCellan (1999) speculated that teachers received almost no training in moral education from the nation's education school. Munson's study (2000) further indicated that the nation's teachers generally were ill equipped morally to deal with the complex problems of today's diversified students.

The 1993 Phi Delta Kappa Gallup poll reported that more than 90 percent of the participants supported public school teaching of such values as honesty, democracy, acceptance of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds, caring for friends and family members, and moral courage. The 1996 Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup poll reported that 86 percent of the participants considered it is "very important" that public schools "prepare students to be responsible citizens" (Elam, Rose, and Gallup, 1996, in Munson, 2000).

Today, educators believe that the moral declivity is threatening the foundations of American life and schooling. The call for fostering such virtues as respect, responsibility, diligence, prudence, and chastity (Nash, 1997) is a common trend.

Teacher education programs need to prepare prospective teachers for the complex social and behavioral problems they will be facing in classrooms. Building prospective teachers characteristics will increase positive qualities that are foundational for responsible citizenship.

National and state standards for high levels of excellence are being integrated into public schools and university class work (Busching, & et al. 2000). Character educators believe unequivocally that virtue can and indeed must be taught in schools and colleges (Nash, 1997). What today's teacher educators need to do is to identify the virtues or characteristics that prospective teachers need to cultivate and integrate such training into teacher education programs. The State where this researcher is teaching, along with thirty other states, is working on educational reform based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. Among the ten standards, six of them deal with interaction, communication and understanding of humans. The emphasis is to train prospective teachers to work effectively with diversified students and the community as a whole. It is important for teacher educators to reexamine their curriculum and make necessary changes to meet these standards. Building characteristics of prospective teachers will enhance their

ability to make wise decisions and demonstrate respect and responsibility by the time they enter the teaching profession.

Teacher education programs serve the function of training prospective teachers and providing services to public and/or private schools. Closely integrated university and practicum assignments engage prospective teachers in learning in "real world" situations (Busching, & et al., 2000). There is an essential need for public schools and teacher training institutions to work closely together in order to train effective teachers. Therefore, it is necessary for teacher training programs to obtain input from experienced teachers and generate suggestions to develop character.

III. Methods and Procedures

This study was conducted in three school districts in the Midwest. Participants included cooperating teachers who worked with student teachers. This study started in 1999. Twelve cooperating teachers and their student teachers were invited to list important characteristics of student teachers. This researcher then compiled the list (see Appendix) and invited 37 public school teachers from three school districts who worked with student teachers to rank the importance of these characteristics. Follow-up interviews were conducted in 2001. Data from the survey results were collected by using a Likert type five-point scale. Excerpts from interviews were documented in this report.

IV. Findings

There were ten male and twenty-seven female teachers who participated in this study. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 6 to 10 years (N=4), 11-15 (N=4), 16-20 (N=4), and the majority of the participants have 21 and more years of teaching experience (62 %, N=23). Among this group 70 percent (N=26) have worked with one to five student teachers.

The cooperating teachers responses indicated enthusiasm (N=29), cooperation (N=29), and positiveness (N=29) were extremely important characteristics of student teachers. The knowledge base of the university model identified analytical, reflective and caring (ARC), as important characteristics which were not marked as important as the above characteristics. In addition to the list of characteristics, these teachers also reported that responsibility, flexibility, organization, preparedness, commitment, vision, total focus, and professional appearance were extremely important.

Excerpts from interviews also indicated cooperating teacher observations noted additional characteristics of student teachers from this college as being enthusiastic, responsible, with a sense of mission, naïve, and lack of poise.

The most mentioned suggestions regarding student teachers effectiveness included: student teachers should not have work other than teaching (N=4); need to accept constructive criticism (N=3); need to be more flexible (N=3); and, need to be lifelong learners (N=2).

As for the question of curriculum modifications, the participants reported many suggestions. Examples included: use freshman orientation to raise the awareness of character education; add character education in the student teaching handbook; let student teachers be aware of "Character Counts" activities and programs; and, discuss these characteristics with prospective teachers in the first teaching professional course, before student teaching, and during the professional semester when students are student teaching.

Participants suggested methods could be applied in teaching character education through using role playing, inviting guest speakers, and using case studies. This researcher considered these methods as ways to direct student teachers' attention on building and shaping behaviors which will demonstrate good citizenship. Making service learning a requirement in teacher education will cultivate the character of prospective teachers. In addition, requiring student teachers to keep a teaching journal will help them to reflect on their daily learning and teaching which may provide a vehicle to examine and reflect upon their own behaviors.

V. Importance of this Study

Character education has become a nationwide movement (Milson, 2000). This movement and the resulting state mandates create many challenges for educators. Teachers are especially expected to serve as positive role models and to seize opportunities to reflect on moral issues within the context of the

curriculum. For character education to be effective, it has to start with the training of prospective teachers.

Learning to teach effectively requires student teachers to use their minds, not only by observing experienced teachers, but also by reflecting on their own thinking and problem solving process. INTASC standards clearly indicate teaching demands certain characteristics other than skills and knowledge of content. How to best prepare prospective teachers for the complex and demanding profession of teaching continues to challenge preservice teacher education. Teacher educators need to invite cooperating teachers' feedback regarding characteristics of student teachers and make necessary curricula changes. This study ascertained desired characteristics of student teachers from public school teachers. Following this study, curricula might possibly be modified in order to train effective teachers for public schools. Darling-Hammond (1994) put it this way: " Teachers (and professors) who have access to teacher network, enriched professional roles, and colleague work feel more efficacious in gaining knowledge they need to meet the needs of their students". This study helped teacher educators to gain such knowledge in training prospective teachers to meet the needs of our rapidly changing society.

Resources

Busching, B., Catoe, S., Medway, F., Shirley, J., & Toner, T. (2000). Partnership for educational renewal; From commitment to institutional reality. ERIC Reproduction Document NO. ED 440060.

Darling-Hammond, L. (Eds.) (1994). Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession. NY: Teacher College Press.

Hunter, J. D. (2000). The death of character. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Kohlberg, L. (1975). The cognitive-developmental approach to moral education. Phi Delta Kappan, 56: 670-677.

McCellan, E. (1999). Moral education in America: Schools and the shaping of character from colonial times to the present. NY: Columbia University Teachers College Press.

Milson, A. J. (2000). Creating a curriculum for character development: A case study. Clearing House, Nov/Dec., 74, 2, 5, 89.

Munson, B. (2000). Character education: The missing ingredient of preservice teacher education programs. ERIC Reproduction Document NO. ED 440069.

Nash, R. J. (1997). Answering the "Virtuecrates". NY: Columbia University Teachers College Press.

APPENDIX:

Profile of Student Teachers

I. Please circle the appropriate answer.

A. I am (1) male (2) female.

B. I have (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15 (4) 16-20 (5) 21 or above years of teaching experience.

C. I have supervised (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15 (4) 16 or more Anderson University student teachers.

The following information will help us in our teacher training program to identify important qualities of student teachers.

II. Please respond to the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Using the scale of 5 to 1 with 5 meaning "not important" and 1 meaning "extremely important", circle the number that reflects your thinking as to the importance of the possession of the quality by student teachers. Thank you for your input.

A. enthusiastic	5	4	3	2	1
B. cooperative	5	4	3	2	1
C. knowledgeable	5	4	3	2	1
D. caring	5	4	3	2	1
E. analytical	5	4	3	2	1
F. reflective	5	4	3	2	1
G. accommodating	5	4	3	2	1
H. humorous	5	4	3	2	1
I. creative	5	4	3	2	1
J. positive	5	4	3	2	1
K. _____	5	4	3	2	1
L. _____	5	4	3	2	1

Other comments: